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-11-

CLAIMS

1. A method of operating a solid state image sensor (1) for the acquisition of an image presented to the sensor in response to an asynchronous stimulus (S), wherein said image sensor is operated in conjunction with at least one detector (4) which, directly or indirectly, detects the said asynchronous stimulus, said image sensor is regularly reset so as to commence integration from a reset state of the sensor each time a predetermined period (T_r) has elapsed, and an output from said at least one detector prior to each reset (R) determines whether that reset is inhibited or not in that if said output represents the detection of said asynchronous stimulus then said reset is inhibited.

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2. A method according to claim 1 wherein the detector outputs a detection signal (D) when said asynchronous stimulus (S) is detected, and said detection signal (D) is used to trigger a reset inhibition control signal (C_r) for inhibiting a subsequent reset signal (R') to the sensor.

3. A method of using a solid state image sensor (1) comprising an array of sensing cells, for the acquisition of an image presented to the sensor in response to an asynchronous stimulus (S), wherein said image sensor is regularly reset so as to commence integrating from a reset state of the sensor each time a predetermined period (T_r) has elapsed, and wherein a portion of the array of the sensor (1) is read prior to each said reset (R) and the value of this read is used to determine whether a subsequent reset (R') signal to the sensor should be inhibited or not in that if said value indicates the occurrence of an asynchronous stimulus then said subsequent reset signal (R') is inhibited.

4. A method according to claim 3, wherein said portion of the array read prior to each reset (R) comprises a plurality of sensing cells which are spatially distributed throughout the

AMENDED SHEET

Printed: 11-05-2000

10-05-2000

P99919428.5 and PCT/GB99/013

CLMS

P09150PC

-12-

array of sensing cells.

a 5. A method according to ^{claim 1} ~~any of claims 1 to 4~~ wherein the asynchronous stimulus is the opening of a camera shutter.

5 6. A method according to ^{claim 1} ~~any of claims 1 to 4~~ wherein the asynchronous stimulus is a flash of light from a lighting strobe.

10 7. Image capture control apparatus suitable for use with a solid state image sensor (1) for the acquisition of an image presented to the sensor in response to an asynchronous stimulus (S), said apparatus comprising at least one detector means (4) formed and arranged for detecting, in use of the
15 apparatus, directly or indirectly, a said asynchronous stimulus (S), and reset inhibition control signal output means (12) formed and arranged for generating a reset inhibition control signal in response to detection of said asynchronous stimulus (S) and supplying it, directly or indirectly, in use
20 of the apparatus, to a reset signal generating means (11) operatively coupled to said solid state image sensor, so as to inhibit the application of at least one subsequent reset signal (R') to the sensor.

25 8. Image capture control apparatus according to claim ⁷ ~~5~~, wherein said at least one detector means (4) and said reset inhibition control signal output means (12) are provided in a single device.

30 9. Image capture control apparatus according to claim ⁷ ~~5 or claim 6~~, wherein said reset inhibition control signal output means (12) and said reset signal generating means (11) are provided together in a single device.

a 35 10. Image capture control apparatus according to ^{claim 7} ~~any of claims 7 to 9~~ wherein the detector is formed and arranged for detecting the opening of a camera shutter.

AMENDED SHEET

Printed 11-05-2000

2

P09150PC

-13-

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11. Image capture control apparatus according to ^{claim 7} ~~any of~~ ~~claims 7 to 9~~ wherein the detector is formed and arranged for detecting a flash of light from a lighting strobe.

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12. A camera having a solid state image sensor, wherein is provided image capture control apparatus according to ^{claim 7} ~~any of~~ ~~claims 7 to 11~~.

10 13. Image capture control apparatus suitable for use with a solid state image sensor (1) for the acquisition of an image presented to the sensor in response to an asynchronous stimulus (S), said apparatus comprising at least one detector means (4) formed and arranged for detecting, in use of the
15 apparatus, directly or indirectly, a said asynchronous stimulus (S), and reset signal generating means (11) operatively coupled to said solid state image sensor for regularly resetting the image sensor, in use of the apparatus, so that the sensor commences integrating from a reset state
20 thereof each time a predetermined period (T_r) has elapsed, reset inhibition control signal output means (12) formed and arranged for generating a reset inhibition control signal in response to detection of said asynchronous stimulus (S) and supplying it, directly or indirectly, in use of the apparatus,
25 to said reset signal generating means, so as to inhibit the application of at least one subsequent reset signal (R') to the sensor.

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